ALAN MOORE · JOHN TOTLEBEN

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# MIRACLEMAN

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19BT

THE JULY MORNING: BIG, HOT, EMPTY, NOT QUITE BROKEN.

THE TOY CITY: EMERGING STOREY BY STOREY FROM COOL GRAY HAZE; BARELY AWAKE BUT DREAMING HARD...

DREAMING OF NEW MUSIC, NEW THOUGHTS, NEW PAINTINGS, A NEW WORLD EVERY DAY.

EVERY DAY.

SOMETIMES, TOY CITIZENS CLAMBER UP HERE ASKING FAVORS; THIS DISEASE NEEDS CURING, THAT RIVER MOVING. SOMETIMES I SAY YES.

THEY WEAR HELMETS FOR THE THIN AIR; WEAR FEAR IN DAMP CRESCENTS BENEATH THEIR SHIRT ARMS.

FUNNY LITTLE BUBBLE-HEADS.

EVENTUALLY, ONE WILL SUFFER A HEART ATTACK WHILE IMPLORING ME TO SQUARE THE CIRCLE OR GRANT IMMORTALITY...

IMMORTALITY.

FATHER, HOW YOU WOULD HAVE LAUGHED TO SEE THIS.

YOUR FACE IS COLD NOW, TANNED SILVER BY THE SPOTLIGHTS.

THE JULY MORNING: BIG, HOT, EMPTY, SILENT.

CROSSING TO THE LECTERN, CLIMBING ITS STEPS RATHER THAN FLYING, I OPEN A BOOK WITH STEEL PAGES.

I HAVE LEGENDS TO WRITE; TALES OF HOW IT FEELS TO LIVE IN A MYTHOLOGY.

I SIT HERE, IN MY STILL, HIGH PLACE, AND TEST THE KEENNESS OF MY STYLUS AGAINST AN UPRAISED FINGERTIP.

THERE; A NEEDLE OF BLOODY LIGHT, AN AFTERTASTE OF OZONE...

I AM READY TO BEGIN.

BOOK III

# OLYMPUS

CHAPTER ONE

# Cronos

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After creation came a time when young gods fought their Titan fathers...

THE **TIME** WAS NOVEMBER, 1982; THE PLACE, LESS **CERTAIN**. WHERE DID IT **BEGIN**? WITH **ME**? OR **HER**? WITH **HIM**, BATES, THE **ADVERSARY**?

YES.

YES, PERHAPS IT BEGAN WITH **HIM**.

...AND THEY ALL STARTED CALLING ME **NAMES**!

OH JOHNNY, I'M **SORRY**. YOU **WANTED** TO MIX WITH OTHER CHILDREN, BUT SOME OF THEM ARE, WELL, **DIFFICULT**...

THEY S-SAID "HERE'S MASTER BATES..."

OH, **DON'T**. DON'T **CRY**.

LOOK, SINCE YOUR **RECOVERY** YOU'VE BEEN DOING SO **WELL**. YOU MUSTN'T LET THESE BULLIES SET YOU **BACK**. STAND **UP** TO THEM.

YOU DON'T **UNDERSTAND**! I **WANTED** TO! I WANTED TO...TO...

YES? IT'S OKAY, JOHNNY. YOU WANTED TO **WHAT**?

"NOTHING. NOTHING IMPORTANT. IT DOESN'T MATTER.

"I'D LIKE TO BE ON MY OWN NOW, PLEASE."

..and in the place of his confinement, the Adversary tested the shackles that bound him, tugging at them.

They creaked, but did not break.

For my own part it was the frail human chain binding me to this world that seemed most in danger of snapping.

LIZ. I WAS AFRAID FOR LIZ.

I WAS SO AFRAID SHE WAS GOING TO CRACK UP...

LIZ...

LIZ...

MIKE, NOTHING'S **WRONG**, WITH ME **OR** WINTER. SHE'S JUST A HEALTHY **BABY** WITH A HEALTHY **APPETITE**...

...AND SHE'S PERFECTLY **NORMAL**. I'M HER **MOTHER**. I SHOULD **KNOW**.

LIZ, SHE'S A MONTH OLD AND SHE HAS TEETH. TWO WEEKS AGO, THAT WOULD HAVE WORRIED YOU SICK...

I...LOOK, I'M CONFUSED. SOMETIMES EVERYTHING'S **FINE**, I FEEL **GREAT**, BUT

**SOMETIMES**...

...SOMETIMES I FEEL SO **WEIRD**.

WEIRD?

AS IF MY FEELINGS AREN'T MY **OWN** ANY MORE. AS IF THEY GET SWITCHED ON AND OFF. IT'S...

...OH, IT'S PROBABLY JUST POST-NATAL DE-PRESSION. LISTEN, LEAVE ME ALONE FOR A WHILE, OKAY? WE'LL TALK LATER.

..and I stepped out, and the November wind drove nails of rain into my brow, and in my heart I was afraid for all that I loved.

Thus I walked amongst men in man's guise, unaware of forces gathering and pennants raised somewhere beyond the dark; beyond the rain..

TURNING THE HEAVY PAGE, I CONTINUE.

OUT IN THE NIGHT, THE WINDSWEPT PARK OFFERED ITS BLEAK CONSOLATION...

..and I walked on, and did not know that Titans walked at my heels.

NOT UNTIL IT WAS TOO **LATE.**

THE BANDSTAND. I REMEMBER I PAUSED AT THE **BANDSTAND**...

ITS PAINTWORK WAS SORE WITH WELTS AND BLISTERS. ADOLESCENT LOVERS HAD GOUGED THEIR NAMES HERE AND THERE, SIGNING THE SITE OF THEIR CLUMSY FUMBLINGS IN THE CORNER, AS IF IT WERE A MASTERPIECE...

RINGED BY SKELETON SHRUBBERY, IT LOOKED HAUNTED.

MR. MORAN?

WE ARE WISH TO SPEAK TO YOU.

THEIR MANNER WAS FORMAL, THEIR ACCENTS VAGUELY SOUTH AMERICAN. I THOUGHT OF THE SPOOK-SHOW. I THOUGHT OF GARGUNZA...

UH...MORAN? NO, 'FRAID NOT. MY NAME'S JOHNSON.

MY NAME. THEY KNEW MY NAME.

WE THINK NOT SO.

MR. MORAN, WE ARE WISH TO DISCUSS YOUR OTHER SELF.

BEHIND THE CHICKEN-WIRE OF THE AVIARY SAT PALE, UNCONSCIOUS CANARIES.

FROM THE GLOOM OF THE PEACOCK ENCLOSURE CAME THE SOUND OF WOMEN SLEEPWALKING, THE HEMS OF THEIR NIGHTGOWNS RUSTLING, DRAGGING ACROSS THE GRAVEL.

IN THE PEACOCK ENCLOSURE, AS IF FROM A SHARED NIGHTMARE, THE SLEEPWALKERS BEGAN TO SCREAM.

KIMOTA.

AND THEN THE LIGHT OF AN OLDER HEAVEN THAN THIS WAS IN MY EYES...

...AND WHEN AGAIN I SAW, I SAW TITANS.

I KNEW THEM NOT FOR TITANS THEN, KNEW NOT THAT CRONOS WAS ARRIVED TO CONFISCATE THE THUNDERBOLTS OF A DELINQUENT ZEUS.

THIS WAS BEFORE SUCH CONCEPTS WERE DEFINED, OR INKED, WHITE HOT, UPON IMMORTAL STEEL.

THIS WAS BEFORE THE TIME OF NAMES AND NAMING, IN DAYS THAT KNEW A BLOODIER IMPERATIVE, KNEW NO CREED SAVE BALLISTICS, NO FAITH BUT IN THE RITUAL OF TENSE ...

..AND SPRING..

..AND THRUST.

LIPS PAINTED WITH BLOOD, I CLUNG TO THE BIRDSHIT-STREAKED CHAIN-LINK, WHERE CONVICTS HAD MARKED OFF THE DAYS OF THEIR SENTENCE IN CHALK ON PENITENTIARY WALLS.

THE TITANS ADVANCED, MY CONFIDENCE DEPARTING WITH THE BIRDS.

THE NEARER ONE RUSHED AT ME, STINKING OF IODINE AND SQUEAKING AS IT MOVED. MOMENTS BEFORE, IT HAD BEEN A YOUNG WOMAN.

I BRACED MYSELF, A CLOCKWORK MAN POWERED BY ADRENALINE MAINSPRINGS, A DESPERATE AND VIOLENT ENGINE...

..THAT WAS ALMOST SUFFICIENT TO ITS TASK...

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A TRAIN FROM HELL. IT CROUCHED IN THE SHUNTING YARD SMOKE OF ITS TRANSFORMATION.

I HAD BUT TWO BODIES. APPARENTELY, THEY POSSESSED *MANY*.

I BEGAN TO UNDERSTAND THE EXTENT OF MY PREDICAMENT...

...WHILE FAILING TO APPRECIATE ITS **BREADTH.**

ALL RIGHT.

ALL **RIGHT**, I'M **COMING.**

NOW, WHO...?

BTAM

AWOH!

WHA..?

WHAT WAS..?

HMMP.

WIND.

BACK THEN, MY PERSPECTIVE WAS LIMITED. I HAD NOT YET SEEN THE VIEW FROM OLYMPUS.

HAD I BEEN OLDER, I'D SURELY HAVE FELT THE STARS SHIFT AS A TERRIBLE NEW ZODIAC SIGN ALIGNED ITSELF.

AS IT WAS, I KNEW ONLY PAIN AND BRIGHT FEATHERS...

THUNDERBULLS, WARBRUTES, THEY TRAMPLED, SNORTING STEAM, AND WORKED MY FACE LIKE WARM, WET CLAY IN THEIR JACKHAMMER HANDS.

ASSAILED BY INCOMPREHENSIBLE BEASTS, I AWAITED A DEATH WITHOUT MEANING IN A PARK I'D FORGOTTEN THE NAME OF.

MORTALITY SMACKED MY FACE, ONCE, TWICE...

I WONDERED HOW LONG IT HAD BEEN SINCE I'D LAST TOLD LIZ I LOVED HER.

I WANTED, DESPERATELY, TO FEEL MY DAUGHTER'S HAIR, UNBELIEVABLY FINE, UNBELIEVABLY SOFT AGAINST MY CHEEK...

...AND THAT WAS MY ERROR.

THE SQUALL OF FISTS ABATED. THE MONSTERS REGARDED EACH OTHER AS IF SURPRISED. IN ENGLISH RECOGNIZABLE DESPITE A VOICE THAT BUZZED, ONE VOICED IN A SINGLE WORD, THE MOST FRIGHTENING UTTERANCE I COULD IMAGINE:

"DAUGHTER?"

A NON-VERBAL EXCHANGE ENSUED, AFTER WHICH ONE RESUMED THE BEATING WHILE THE OTHER FLED ACROSS THE GRAY NIGHT GRASS. I SCREAMED AFTER IT USELESSLY.

THEY READ *MINDS*...

...AND HADN'T KNOWN MY CHILD EXISTED BEFORE I'D TOLD THEM.

THE BRUTE CROUCHED UPON MY CHEST, GRINDING SPARKS FROM ITS JAWS. THEY SHOWERED HOT UPON MY CHEEK, UPON THE PETROL OF MY DESPERATE RAGE...

ITS ACCOMPLICE WOULD ALREADY HAVE LEFT THE PARK...

FRACTURING TWO OF MY OWN FINGERS I PUNCHED THROUGH ITS ABDOMEN, IMMEDIATELY DRENCHED IN ITS SCALDING FLUIDS, STEAMING AND PHOSPHORESCENT.

SHUDDERING IN THE WAY THAT PIGS DO UPON REALIZING THEIR THROATS ARE CUT, IT PRONOUNCED FIVE DREADFUL SYLLABLES.

BUS STOP

BRIEFLY, I EMBRACED AN INFANT SUN THAT SCRIBBLED BRIGHT, AUTISTIC CRAYON LINES ACROSS EACH RETINA. IT BECAME SOMETHING LIKE A GIANT, SEVERED HAND; A STICKY MOUTH GLISTENING IN ITS PALM.

I PULVERIZED ONE OF ITS KNUCKLES. THE BLACK LIPS WRITHED, INCONTINENT, ABOUT A PROFANITY COINED BENEATH OTHER CONSTELLATIONS.

I COULD NOT STAY THE RECITAL OF ITS BARE, INCENDIARY HAIKU. I COULD NOT SLAM THE COVERS SHUT UPON ITS HIDEOUS VOCABULARY.

IT SPOKE...

GOD CLAPPED HIS HANDS.

ITS NEW FORM LOOKED AND FELT LIKE A SHARK TURNED INSIDE-OUT. I PROMISED THAT MY WIFE SHOULD NOT FALL PREY TO THESE NOVEMBER HORRORS...

...KNOWING ALREADY THAT MY PROMISE WAS MEANINGLESS.

TSK. NOT AGAIN.

IT'S ALL RIGHT, WINTER. I'LL BE BACK IN A SECOND.

IT'S ONLY THE SILLY WIND. IT'S BLOWN THE...

KRRACK

AAAAAAAAA

OH NO, OH GOD, JESUS, PLEASE...

WHAT DO YOU WANT? YOU KEEP AWAY!

YOU GET AWAY FROM ME, OR...

OH.

KLITCH

ASSUMING YOU CAN STILL UNDERSTAND ENGLISH IN THIS BODY, I WANT YOU TO KNOW THAT I'VE JUST CRUSHED YOUR LARYNX.

YOU SEE, THERE ARE ***SOME*** SITUATIONS YOU JUST ***CAN'T*** TALK YOUR WAY OUT OF.

TO HAVE SEEN HER THEN, AS LIZ DESCRIBED HER LATER: COLD AND GLITTERING, A STATUE OF CUT GLASS, IMMACULATE SAVE FOR GAUNTLETS DARKENED BY UNEARTHLY BLOOD...

APHRODITE, RISEN FROM THE CHURNING FOAM WHERE FELL THE MANHOOD OF CRONOS.

MY WORDS SMOULDER, COOLING UPON THE OPEN PAGE. I CROSS TO THE WINDOWS, HEELS DUSTED WITH SPARKS.

MORE THAN A THOUSAND FLOORS BELOW, WIND-DRIVEN CLOUDS DRAG ZEBRA SKINS OF SUNLIGHT AND SHADOW ACROSS THE WAKING CITY.

TO THE NORTH, THE SAME BREEZE DRIVES THE PAINTED SAILS OF WINDMILL FORESTS THAT WRING ELECTRICITY FROM CLEAR SKIES.

THE GREAT VANES TURN, SERENE AS KITES, GORGEOUS AND HYPNOTIC AS THE FANS OF GEISHAS.

LOOKING DOWN, LONDON BECOMES A COMPOSITION OF SMOKE-BLUES AND 'FORTIES-FILM-GRAY, VIEWED BY AN ABSTRACT PAINTER, OR ONE SUFFERING FROM APHASIA.

THE MIRROR-WALLED BUILDINGS ARE SKY-AQUARIUMS, IMAGINARY CLOUDS SWIMMING UNDER GLASS.

ON A TRAFFIC-LOOM, NEEDLESTREAMS OF CARS DART NORTH-SOUTH ON GREEN, PAUSING ON RED WHILE THE SHUTTLE MOVES EAST-WEST.

FROM ANIMATED HOARDINGS, ROUGED BOYS SNEER AT PEDESTRIANS GROWN PALE IN THE SHADE OF A NEW FUJI.

EACH MORNING I WATCH THEM, MY MARVELOUS EYES PIERCING CLOTHING AND SKIN, ABLE TO SEE AT DIFFERENT SPEEDS. SLOW-MOTION LENDS THE OLDER ONES A BOVINE, ANIMAL DIGNITY.

...AND SCATTER TO THE NIGHT'S COLD VECTORS THE ASHES OF THEIR UNOPENED PRAYERS.



EACH EVENING, I WALK THE AIRLESS BATTLEMENTS...

~to be continued~